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ABSTRACT

Literature on the status of faculty development programming in higher education during the last decade is reviewed. It is suggested that during the 1970s faculty development underwent a boom period and is now in an important transitional phase. In the 1970s, financial problems and fears of retrenchment influenced the growth of faculty development programs. Faculty development was guided by the principles that the faculty's main role is to teach, teaching competence is not instinctive, and faculty must learn to improve classroom instruction. During the 1973-1978 "boom" period, there was a dramatic increase in faculty development programming and models, "how-to" publications were introduced and accepted, and the involvement of private and federal funding agencies and foundations accelerated. The faculty development movement was also marked by the attention of scholarly publications. It is suggested that the academic community should: continue to write on faculty development; develop and test new models that stress interrelationships of faculty development with the learner and the institution; develop mechanisms for training faculty as faculty development specialists; and incorporate faculty development as a continuing and ongoing campus priority. (SW)

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EXCEL

EXChange for Enrichment of Learning

Report:

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT:
A MOVEMENT ON THE BRINK -
(OF WHAT)?

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Dr. LeRoy L. Sullivan
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FACULTY DEVELOPMENT:
A MOVEMENT ON THE BRINK - (OF WHAT)?

PURPOSE

This report is intended to provide the reader with an overview of the status of faculty development programming in higher education during the last decade. It attempts to trace the history of the faculty development concept from its early philosophical belief that improving subject matter competence would automatically result in increased teaching proficiency to the current realization that subject matter competence and teaching proficiency are separate issues that are not perfectly correlated. Today teaching excellence is seen as an academic competency which can be refined with appropriately structured professional growth experiences and programs for the faculty. It is hoped that this report will alert the reader to the current state of the art and stimulate thought on how teaching excellence might be further promoted.

SCOPE

This paper reviews the higher education literature on the topic of faculty development. The works cited come from all levels of postsecondary education (2 year, 4 year, graduate and professional schools) and from various types of institutions (private and public). Faculty development has been treated as both a theoretical concept and as an operational activity. In community colleges faculty development is frequently referred to as staff development. For the purposes of this paper these terms are used interchangeably.

In addition to tracing the history of faculty development, this document analyzes past and present trends and states the author's recommendations about appropriate actions by the academic community. The opinions expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the University. Readers are strongly encouraged to react to the opinions expressed using the Evaluation and Recommendation Form at the end of the report.

ORGANIZATION

This paper is written in the manuscript style specified in the Publication Guide of the American Psychology Association. It addresses the topic from a historical and chronological perspective. All cited references appear at the end of the paper.

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FACULTY DEVELOPMENT:
A MOVEMENT ON THE BRINK - (OF WHAT)?

by

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FACULTY DEVELOPMENT:

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ABSTRACT

During the 1970's faculty development in American higher education experienced a significant conceptual and structural metamorphosis. A combination of environmental and attitudinal factors created the conducive atmosphere for this hectic period of growth and change. This work analyzes the contributing factors, compares the faculty development movement with the developmental characteristics of a typical boom period, and concludes that the movement may now be at a precarious transitional stage. Evidence is given clearly substantiating that the faculty development movement has exhibited classic boom characteristics. In doing so, it is suggested that it may have literally come too far too fast. As a result, the movement may now be on the brink of either greater fulfillment through consolidation and maturation or impending disaster. In response to this vulnerable stage, several constructive suggestions are made in order to tip the scale in the positive direction. Without the thoughtful attention of the academic community, however, it is cautioned that the faculty development movement could burn out and die leaving only a superficial residue rather than a rich legacy for the future.

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT:

A MOVEMENT ON THE BRINK - (OF WHAT)?

Faculty development as both a theoretical concept and an operational activity has undergone a significant metamorphosis during the last decade. These changes have been rapid and dramatic. The 1970's can, therefore, be accurately described as a faculty development boom period. Recent evidence suggests, however, that this boom phase is now over. As a consequence, the movement may now be in a precarious transitional phase with its future hanging in the balance. This article will attempt to examine the factors which precipitated faculty development's change and meteoric growth, analyze its current status, and recommend appropriate action by the academic community to foster its survival and further evolution.

Historically, academia has been fondly conceived of as a community of scholars. The faculty has, therefore, always been a central and vital component in this environment. During these formative years, faculty development focused squarely on the improvement of the subject matter competence of the academic scholar. Mastery of one's discipline was, therefore, conceived of as both the necessary and sufficient condition and qualification for teaching. It was implicitly assumed that there was a direct positive relationship between discipline competence and teaching proficiency. Those who then challenged

this premise frequently countered with an assumption of their own - that teaching competence was innate and unlearnable. Given these fundamental assumptions, faculty development had little impetus to change during the first six decades of this century. The 1960's and 1970's, however, brought with it conditions that were destined to challenge the very foundation upon which traditional faculty development had been founded.

Environmental Factors

The student activism of the 1960's and the accompanying vocal demands for relevance and excellence in teaching precipitated a fundamental shift in faculty development emphasis from the mastery of content toward the improvement of teaching. The insistence of state legislatures on increasing productivity supported this trend.

It was, however, the fiscal austerity and impending deterioration of student enrollments, first manifested in the early 1970's, which caused colleges and universities to seriously re-examine their view of faculty development. Many institutions abruptly found that they could no longer afford to hire new faculty to infuse new ideas, provide leadership potential, or introduce innovative teaching techniques (Seldin, 1976). The high percentage of tenured faculty, coupled with an extended retirement age, meant that the academy would inevitably be retaining an increasingly older "steady state" faculty in a "declining state" environment. With these precipitating conditions, the decade of the 1970's provided a fertile environment for the renovations of the faculty

development concept and the higher education institution's commitment to it. As is so often true in history, crises had again stimulated change.

The Boom Phase (1973-78)

In a near frantic search for solutions to the coming problems of retrenchment, institution after institution looked to the newly evolving faculty development concept for their salvation. In its revitalized form, the faculty development movement internalized three new guiding principles: (1) the primary function of the faculty is to teach; (2) teaching competence is not instinctive and innate; and (3) faculty can and must learn to improve their classroom performance (Seldin, 1976). This combination of environmental factors and new operational tenets provided the catalyst for the metamorphosis of the faculty development movement and stimulated the boom period which followed.

As in any boom phase, the period was characterized by an era of rapid and uncontrolled growth and activity. At least five characteristic elements of a boom pattern can be readily observed in the explosion of the faculty development during the 1973-78 period. Examination of each will give valuable insights regarding the nature of the movement's meteoric growth.

First, such periods are characterized by rapid expansion of involvement or "bandwagonism". Bergquist (1975) reported that in the early 1970's, faculty development programs could be found on only 40 to 50 campuses. By 1975 he reported that

that figure had increased to 200. Just two years later Centra (1977), in a survey of 2,600 higher education institutions, identified 1,004 institutions which reported having "an organized program or set of practices for faculty development and improving instruction". Research by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) confirmed this trend by reporting 78 different titles for identified faculty development activities (Crow, 1976). In the same vein, Sullivan (1979 & 1980) reported 128 variations in name when attempting to identify programs for the improvement of learning and instruction. These findings clearly demonstrate an associated problem inherent in any new evolving movement - lack of standardization of terminology. Regardless of this contaminating factor, the evidence clearly substantiates dramatic increase in faculty development programming during this period.

Secondly, rapid and uncontrolled growth in a boom phase typically stimulates attempts to restore purposefulness and order. This trait can be observed in the faculty development movement by the introduction of reasoned conceptual frameworks and models. In 1975 two such models of faculty development were introduced. Bergquist and Phillips (1975) proposed an all-encompassing concept which included instructional, organizational and personal development components. Gaff, (1975) on the other hand, viewed faculty development in a more restricted context stressing the importance of promoting faculty growth by helping faculty members acquire knowledge, skills, sensitivities and techniques that related to teaching

and learning. This interpretation by Gaff coincided very closely with the Bergquist and Phillips notion of the personal development of faculty as a subset emphasis. Although both views depicted faculty development as a component of a larger whole, the movement appeared to have adopted an operational definition which was closely attuned to Gaff's more restrictive focus for faculty development. Failure to adopt the broader context may have been an error which may haunt the movement later. O'Banion (1976) offered additional models using the term "staff development" which was evolving as a parallel emphasis in the community college sector. Although lack of standardization of terminology confounded the beneficial impact of modeling, these conceptual frameworks provide a base upon which the movement could blossom.

A third boom characteristic is the introduction and acceptance of "how-to" publications. In this regard, the faculty development movement was classic. Seldin(1976) reported that Change Magazine, in its role of harbinger of the future in higher education, published a handbook which rapidly sold 22,000 copies. Change's series of these publications on the faculty development issue sold over 90,000 copies (Gaff, 1977). Seldin also indicated that the Bergquist, Phillips, and Queal (1975) Handbook on Faculty Development was sold out in its first two months on the market. This level of acceptance of the movement's "how-to" publications clearly documented the hectic nature of this faculty development boom period.

A fourth indication of a boom period is the accelerated involvement of private and federal funding agencies and

foundations. In this regard, the Exxon, Danforth, Lilly, and Kellogg foundations all infused substantial sums into the faculty development arena. The Carnegie Corporation was also involved by the partial funding of the SREB examination of faculty development in the South. The federal government provided further stimulation through such agencies as the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) and National Institute of Education (NIE). During the mid 1970's, substantial fiscal commitments were being made by these and other granting agencies. Institutions, feeling the pinch of retrenchment, were not bashful about seeking this type of support. Competition for these funds did, therefore, tend to increase the frenzy of the period.

The fifth indication of a boom psychology is a movement's ability to command scholarly attention by stimulating writing and publishing on the topic. One gross measure of this dimension is the volume of scholarly works published during the given period. Using the descriptor "faculty development" in a computer bibliographic search of four data bases, this author discovered 338 individual citations during the 1973-79 time period. Publishing frequency appeared to build dramatically to a peak of 88 articles in 1977 and 80 in 1978, followed by a substantial decline to 42 articles in 1979 and only four identified during the first quarter of 1980. In the four years preceding this period publishing frequency averaged less than four articles per year. This trend toward rising scholarly activity during the mid 1970's further documents the boom

nature of this period.

This combination of objective indices clearly establishes that the 1970's was a period of dramatic and unprecedented faculty development involvement. As O'Banion (1976) suggested the movement was, indeed, "...a new priority of the seventies". Without doubt, faculty development was a movement whose time had arrived.

Post Boom Phase

The end of a boom period is a critical time for any movement. The dangers of coming too far too fast are significant. The greater the excesses of the boom phase the more likely is a post boom depression. Following such a period, a movement tends either to mature or begin to die. At the period of transition it is often difficult to determine which of these trends will prevail. This is precisely where this author sees the faculty development movement today.

As documented earlier, a movement often finds strength and purpose from the environmental conditions that exist. The faculty development movement found its birth in the fears and reality of retrenchment of the 1970's. Regrettably, the prudent observer does not have to look far to discover that the factors that stimulated the initial growth of faculty development appear to be continuing to worsen in the 1980's. In a recently published report, the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education has projected that student enrollments are expected to further diminish during the first half of this decade, level off temporarily, and

then erode once again in a downward spiral until the mid-1990's (Carnegie Council, 1980). A continuing trend toward heavy over-production of PhDs during the 1980's in comparison with anticipated openings is predicted by Al Carter (1976). At the same time, new initiatives like California's Propositions 13 and 9 are symptoms of further challenges to the strength of higher education's fiscal support base.

Given these factors, it would appear that faculty development is truly a movement on the brink. What the academic community does now may determine whether it is the brink of greater fulfillment or impending disaster.

To tilt the scale in the positive direction, the academic community must: (1) continue to write and encourage publishers to publish on the topic; (2) develop and test new models which stress the holistic interrelationship of faculty development with the learner, the instruction, and the organization; (3) clarify and standardize terminology; (4) form and revitalize professional organizations which focus on the advancement of faculty development; (5) evaluate and document the accomplishments of faculty development programming; (6) develop mechanisms for the training of faculty as faculty development specialists; (7) plan for controlled and purposeful growth and consolidation; (8) incorporate faculty development as a continuing and on-going campus emphasis; and (9) establish a permanent basis of institutional funding. If such proactive measures are

not taken, faculty development may fall prey to the host of negative postulates, recounted by Hammonds (1976), which may form the foundation for its ultimate demise.

In summary, faculty development has been a movement which both reacted to and, in turn, caused significant and rapid change in higher education. The boom nature of the movement has, however, created a vulnerability which could markedly affect the movement's lasting impact. Whether the movement will burn out and die, leaving only a superficial residue, or will mature with a rich legacy for the future is still in question at this transition point.

Those with unbounding enthusiasm and commitment to the movement might summarily conclude that the future of the movement is obviously and incontrovertibly bright. In a call for caution, this author would invite these optimists to reflect on the fate of several examplary staff and faculty development programs of the 1970's which no longer exist. If left unattended, the faculty development movement could hang in the academic closet like the leisure suit of the 1970's. The behavior of the academic community now could significantly determine the long range fate of this movement. It is hoped that this discussion will alert the community and stimulate renewed scholarly dialogue on the topic.

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